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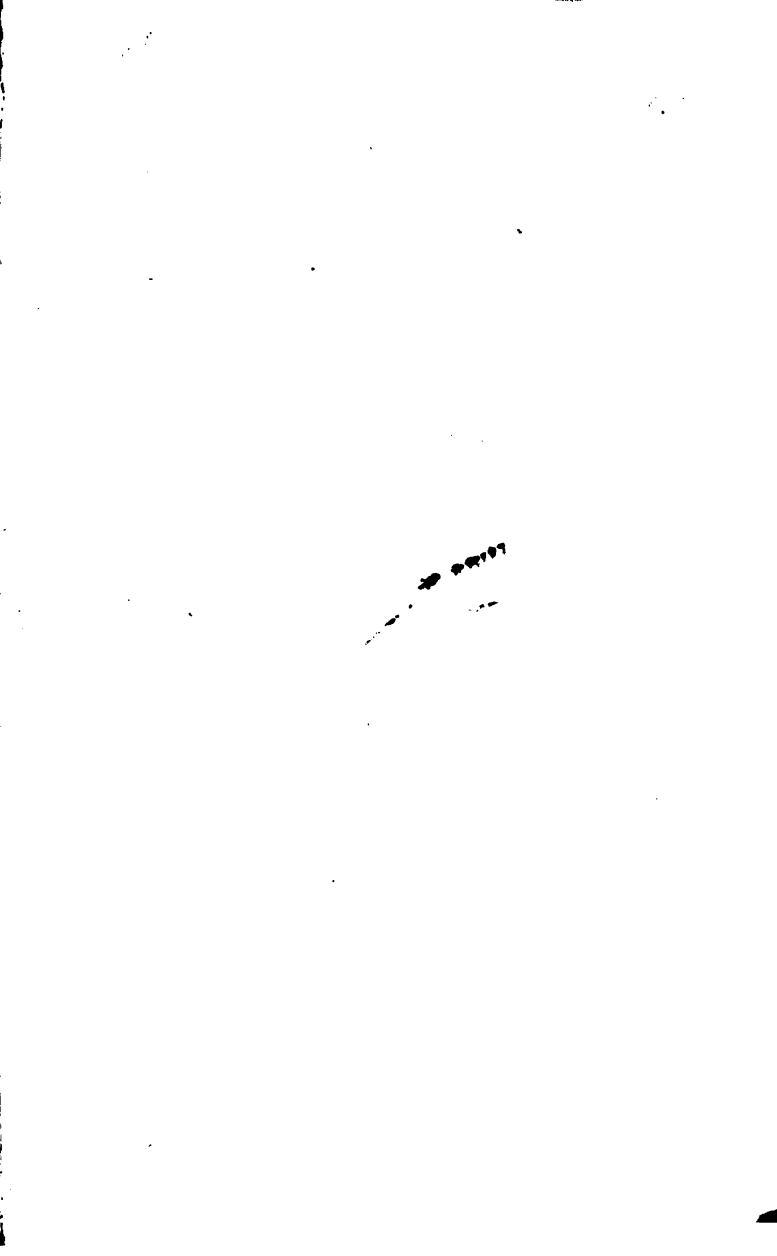
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James

~~PRESENTED~~

~~TO THE~~

Theological School,
CAMBRIDGE,





**THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE
MIRACLES AND DOCTRINES
OF SCRIPTURE.**



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THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE
MIRACLES AND DOCTRINES
OF SCRIPTURE.

The Essay which obtained the *Rossian Prize*
FOR THE YEAR 1852.

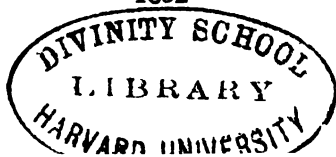
BY THE
James
REV. FRANCIS J. JAMESON, B.A.
FELLOW OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE.

"Miracula sunt doctrinae tesserae ac sigilla; quemadmodum igitur
sigillum a literis avulsum nihil probat, ita quoque miracula sine doc-
trina nihil valent."

GERHARD.

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MACMILLAN AND CO.

1852





TO THE

REV. BENEDICT CHAPMAN, D.D.

MASTER OF GONVILLE AND CAIUS COLLEGE,

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

IN every successive age of the world, both philosophy, and religion, have had their different phases. Not that truth has ever altered, or has been rising and falling with the fluctuations of human opinions ; but with the progress of society, man has successively reached different landing-places from which the subjects of his thought have been surveyed in different points of view. We may trace the effect of this circumstance peculiarly in the Evidences of Christianity. In an age leavened by Paganism,—wont to regard oracular intimations as the essential emanations and marks of Deity, while it looked with credulous admiration at every wonder as a miracle,—the literal fulfilment of ancient prophecies seemed the great witness to the truth of a new religion. But when the fulfilment of prophecy was a thing of the past, and the interval between the prophecy and its alleged accomplishment—(the all-important element in this kind of evidence)—was becoming

more and more diminished or undefined by the distance of a retrospective survey, this witness ceased to bring with it conviction. A generation was come, in which intellect stood erect amid a general laxity of religion and morals, and which scoffed at Christianity till compelled to acknowledge the historic truth of its *miracles*. This again passed away; and another generation (our own) has arisen more warmly conscious perhaps, than any preceding one, of the inner needs of man's nature, and more ready to lend an ear to the cries of human feelings. It is not miracles merely that such an age demands, as the test of a religion which is to meet its wants, but something that speaks to the heart and intellect combined. Such a test Christianity supplied,—capable as it is and ever will be of adapting its address to the capacities and feelings of each listening generation. Around us we see started theories which are to account for and satisfy the inward sighings of our nature; agreeing mostly in this, that they represent the human race as moving forward, under one grand law of the universe, towards a condition of social perfection. But all that is attempted by such theories, is

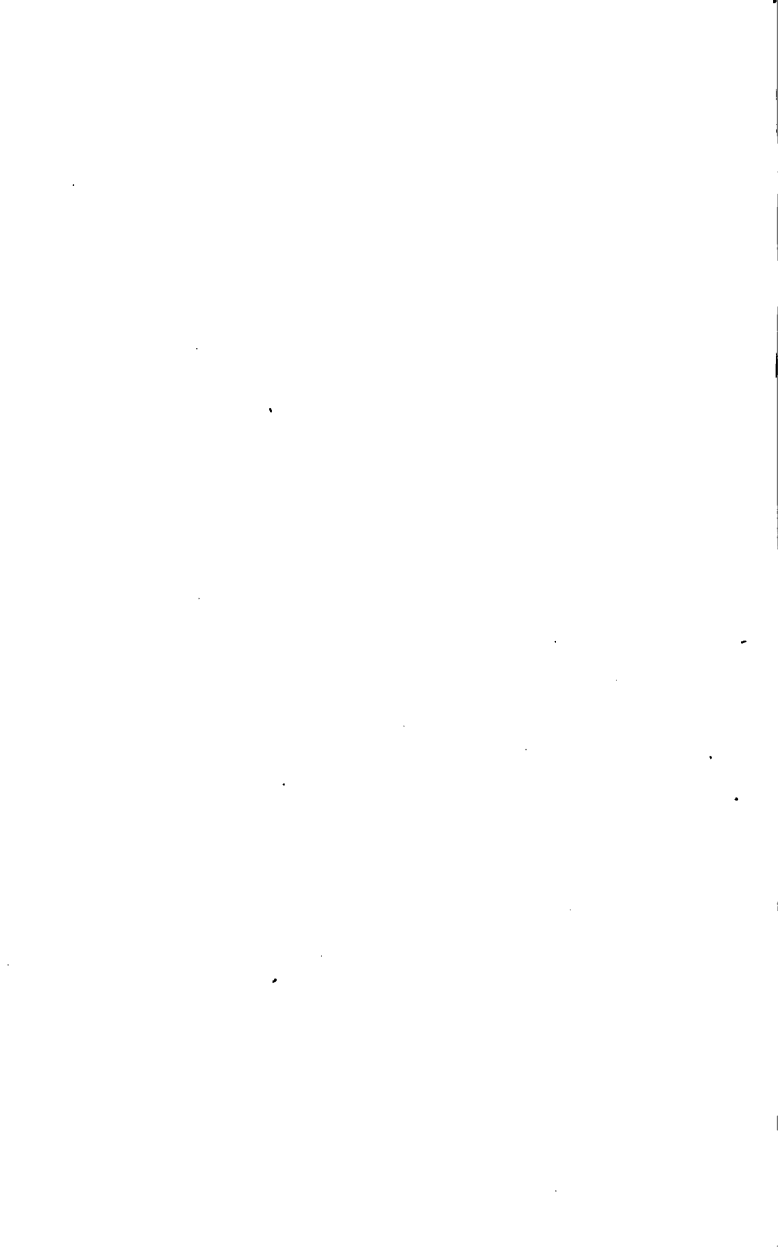
provided, and infinitely more fully, by revealed religion. True, its supporters may sometimes seem to limit its qualifications as the specific for human requirements, by forgetting its plastic power of adapting itself to men's varying feelings, by allowing the telescope by which its heavenly truths are viewed to be set to but one focus; but let each man contemplate God's revelation at whatever distance and in whatever manner best suits his peculiar eye-sight, and every human heart will assuredly find in it a satisfaction for its every want. Will you accept of no system that does not shew you some *law* at work in the world, which will give some explanation of the calamities to which our race has been incident so as to hold out some hope for society's futurity? Here you have it. Take up candidly the records of revelation into your own hands and examine them in your own way, and you will find just such a law pervading all the stages of revelation; a law, by which God has been instructing mankind and gradually opening to them the secrets of His treasure-house;—by which He has been making the experience of individuals, the events of nations, aye, and the calamities of mankind, to work to-

wards the full development of doctrines, capable of bestowing on man both socially and individually all that heart could desire. In attestation of a system which thus gives what you seek, miracles have been exhibited ;—the possibility of which it is no part of *your* objections to dispute, and of whose reality conclusive proofs have been drawn forth by the age of a colder scepticism than yours. If I had established thus much, you would perhaps allow that there was enough evidence to shew the reasonableness of revealed religion in the one case, and its historic truth in the other. But I would take you farther. I would ask you to investigate whether there were no indications of these doctrines and these miracles being parts of *one* harmonious system of development, working under one and the same general law for the one great end, the exaltation of the human race. If here also I were to give adequate proofs of the existence of such harmony, this would be a confirmation of the faith which might reasonably have been demanded of you on the former testimony.

A mode, somewhat of this kind, of viewing the Christian Evidences, seems to be called for by the peculiar scepticism of the day, which, allowing

the wants of humanity, attempts to satisfy them by other means than revelation affords. The latter part of the above argument forms the subject of this Essay. It is required to be proved that the progression of revealed doctrines, and the introduction of miracles in the different stages of that progression, were subject to one law. The following pages contain but an outline of the argument by which this important point may be established. The nature of a Norrisian Essay necessitated this briefness; but the writer trusts that this slight sketch may be suggestive of a course of thought, which when fully carried out will shew that it is Christianity alone which can and which will "hold its ground against the ever-increasing momentum of our modern philosophy*."

* Restoration of Belief. Essay I. p. 100.



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3. They were *redemptive acts*, and so set forth Christ as Redeemer from the effects of Adam's sin.

Their object was, deliverance

- a. From the moral effects of sin.

- β. From the physical effects of sin.
- γ. From the discords of nature.
- δ. From the curse of scarcity.
- 4. They exhibited Christ as Divine. The stilling of the storm. Healing of the leper and paralytic. The raising of Lazarus.
- 5. They bring out Christ's character as Lawgiver of a new Dispensation, and as a Priest of an order higher than that of the Levitical priests. Mode of cleansing the leper. Cures on the Sabbath-day.
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"JOHN NORRIS, Esq., by his Will bequeathed a premium of 12*l.* per annum, 7*l.* 4*s.* of which is to be expended upon a Gold Medal, the residue in Books, to the author of the best prose Essay on a sacred subject, which is to be proposed by the Norrisian Professor. The qualifications for a candidate are—1st, That he be above twenty years of age,—2nd, That he must have attended twenty of the Norrisian Lectures. The successful candidate is required to publish his Essay within two calendar months. No doctrine must be advanced contrary to the Liturgy, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England."

THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE MIRACLES AND DOCTRINES OF SCRIPTURE.

Introduction.

TO a race of fallen beings, who yet, from glimmerings within, have had hopes awakened that some external light might arise and shine upon the path which would lead them back to their God, how important, when certain doctrines are promulgated professing to afford that light, is the enquiry, "Whence are they, from heaven or of men?" Unhappily for man, the expectation of deliverance arouses the energies of the lying spirits that brood over the earth; and, as in the day of Jerusalem's desolation, many false prophets personated the expected Messiah, so innumerable forms of error endeavour to cheat him into the belief that they are indeed the looked-for truth. Amid this confusion of conflicting pretensions, he looks earnestly for some traces of a Divine agency. God, says he, must be more powerful than man; and unless I see signs of that superior power in the manifestation of a scheme of salvation, I have no guarantee that it

is not the offspring of some human imagination. Miracles are such signs. If in attestation of certain doctrines the dead are raised, the storm is calmed by a word, the sea made firm ground for the feet of man,—if by no adequate natural instrumentality, the eyes of the blind are opened, and diseases cured,—then are performances wrought which point directly to superhuman agency. Waiving for a moment all consideration of the possibility of any miraculous agency other than God's, man has now merely to ascertain that the system of doctrines which the miracles appear to attest is really that which is attested by them. Satisfaction on this point is clearly to be sought in the degree of correspondence which exists between the doctrines and the nature and tendency of the miracles. If the character of the miracle were such as to contradict the doctrine, the latter, instead of being attested, would be proved to be false; and the closer the analogy between the two, the more sure may man be that he possesses the expected revelation from heaven.

But not thus easily in reality can all doubt be removed. There is an active principle of evil in the world, a kingdom of darkness whose claims have to be maintained; and from this lower origin miracles may and have come. Hence arises the question: Supposing certain miracles and certain doctrines to agree in character, still

are we sure they come from God? Theologians have met this enquiry with solutions of such opposite descriptions, as would seem to give some countenance to the taunt of the sceptic, that Christians argue in a circle, asserting that the miracles prove the doctrines, and the doctrines, the miracles. One class of writers have maintained, that whatever is attested by miracles must infallibly be true, because God alone can work miracles, and that therefore all wonders wrought in support of what is evil must be impostures;—while another class have argued, that miracles of themselves afford no conclusive proof of the divine origin of a professed revelation, but that when we have examined the nature of its doctrines, the final appeal for the establishment of its truth is to our previous intuitive notions of what is Divine*. Such methods of defence would seem to indicate too great an anxiety on the part of the champions of Christianity to fight the enemy on his own ground, an external station, namely, from which revelation can be coldly surveyed, and its evidence be measured by the stiff and soulless rule of, so to speak, geometrical reasoning. God speaks not merely to the outward ear, nor exhibits his scheme of mercy merely to the outward eye. A finer sense within can detect the marks of divinity sooner and more surely than the outer

* The former notion is supported by Lemoine and many others, the latter by Dr Samuel Clarke.

sense, in the transforming power of the doctrines on the heart. The latter of the two classes of writers alluded to above submit God's revelation to the judgment of a heart in which the finer sense is unawakened, and which has not yet been warmed by the glow of its blessed doctrines. Moreover, Christianity,—including in that name both the doctrines and their attesting miracles,—is a harmonious whole; and it is only by weighing each and every one of its evidences that we can form an accurate estimate of any particular one. By the former class of writers, the “works,” to use the words of Professor Trench, “have been forcibly severed from the whole complex of Christ's life and doctrine, and presented to the contemplation of men apart from these;—when on his head are ‘many crowns,’ one only has been singled out in proof that he is King of kings and Lord of lords. The miracles have been spoken of as though they borrowed nothing from the truths which they confirmed, but those truths every thing from them; when indeed the true relation is one of mutual interdependence, the miracles proving the doctrines and the doctrines approving the miracles *.”

Still, to the infidel, to one who insists on examining the external before he touches the internal evidences,—who refuses to acknowledge the citadel to be strong till he has ascertained

* Notes on the Miracles, chap. vi. p. 93.

that the outposts are well defended,—this method of viewing the subject may appear unsatisfactory. The believer too may feel anxious to rest his faith on more authoritative ground than the perfect harmony of the Scripture system; and he may, after all, look back on the miracles with the wish to find in them the chief basis of his belief. There is a consideration which may probably satisfy both. Why did God work miracles at all? In order, as was said before, that man might recognize God's revelation when it came. If then the Deity be what reason assigns to the name of God,—the Omnipotent Creator and Governor of all things,—is it probable, nay, rather, is it possible, that He should permit the powers of evil,—over which He is Supreme,—so to thwart the *sole purpose* of His miraculous interpositions, as to exhibit miracles of such power and pretensions as would leave bewildered man in doubt which were from God and which from Satan? If the prince of evil were permitted to work wonders of greater, or even equal, power, with the miracles wrought by God, this would, I conceive, be an *à priori* indication that no plan of mercy was designed for mankind at large;—such would be the only reasonable hypothesis on which the phenomenon could be explained. Now let us turn to facts. We see a series of miracles, standing by themselves in the

world's history, shewing a power over the elements, over man, over life and death, in short, over the highest functions of nature, wrought professedly by God's agency; we see no counter-miracles professing to disprove their divine origin, and to convince the world that they had their source in the prince of evil, or, if we do, proving a miserable failure;—and then we turn to the wonders performed professedly by demoniac agency, and we find them few in number, doubtful often even in their claim to a miraculous character, generally answering some manifest purpose of the Almighty, and thus shewing that they were done only by His permission. With this primary evidence before us, if we believe in a God, and that He would give us a revelation,—and if we did not, the question would not be about the origin but the *reality* of miracles,—we cannot but conclude that the scheme in attestation of which this series of miracles was wrought is indeed the revelation we looked for from heaven;—and this conclusion we come to before we have heard a single one of its doctrines.

Now comes the supplementary evidence. Satisfied that a divine hand has been sent unto us (Ezek. ii. 9), we take the roll of the book that is therein, and seek in its declarations a confirmation of our faith. A single glance is sufficient to shew that there is nothing in these to contradict

our previously formed notions of what is divine, suggested by the face of nature and by intuition. But beyond this point we must beware how we treat the subject-matter of this heaven-sent record as mere objective philosophy. We may indeed search into its most minute parts for internal evidence of its truth; we may compare its doctrines and precepts with the nature and design of the previously wrought miracles; but unless at the same time we subject our hearts to the full sway of those doctrines, we shall have omitted one of the most important pillars upon which as a compact whole the fabric of Christianity rests—unless, with the humility of faith, we suffer the truth to speak for itself in its influence over our moral being, we shall have lost the final and most powerful means of conviction to our own minds that we have not followed cunningly-devised fables.

Such then being the relation between the miracle and the doctrine in their bearing on the evidences of the Christian faith, the miracle leading us to the doctrine, the doctrine confirming the miracle, and both uniting in pointing to God as their common Author, be it our pleasing task to trace in detail the harmony of these two great parts of our religion; not pausing outside the field of revelation to deliberate whether the miracles are sufficient to induce us to enter, or the doctrines as seen in the distance such as to war-

rant our entering ; but, leaving the outer borders, let us stand with unsandalled feet in the very midst of the holy ground ; let us cull the flowers of this moral paradise, and ponder on the similarity they bear to those that strewed the path which led us hither.

CHAPTER I.

The Scheme of Revelation.

THE method by which God has given to us the revelation of Himself has been like "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." It came not in one sudden burst of glory when the sun of man's primitive purity was quenched in darkness; but as age followed age, each caught a ray more than the preceding. Let us watch the progress of its dawning.

The very instant that man sinned, he stood in need of a revelation; not however to tell him that there was a God, that He was pure and just, and that His creatures were bound to love and obey Him. Adam knew all this; he had a perfect natural religion. But what he needed to know was, that there was *hope* for him. God revealed to him just the simple fact that there was; and directed him to offer up in sacrifice to Himself the life of beasts as a pledge,—vague no doubt to Adam in its typical meaning,—of its certainty, and as a formal means by which man might share by an act of faith the benefits of a scheme of salvation yet undeveloped. As time rolled on, the effects of the fall became visible, and men began to corrupt themselves; they were

losing the *natural* religion of Adam. When left to themselves we know what they came to,—such, that nothing but their destruction from the face of the earth by the flood could blot out their wickedness; and God has shewn us the same picture in the history of heathen nations for two thousand years after that event. We have learnt how, when man has been left without the guidance of Deity, he has departed farther and farther from his God, till even with the most polished civilization and the most refined philosophy could co-exist the adoration of brutes and of senseless matter, and the most degrading vices. Man, when brought into this condition, when born in sin, and not having, like Adam, a state of innocence to look back upon, needs something else beside the mere knowledge that there is a plan for his deliverance in store; he wants to know the character of his Maker; he wants to know, above all, how he may approach Him; he wants, in fact, the perfect *natural* religion of Adam. To satisfy these desires is an essential part of the office of revelation; and as the elements of a pure worship were successively unfolded to Noah, to Abraham, and to the patriarchal family, we see the eastern horizon growing brighter and brighter. Still we must not forget that all the while human hearts were yearning to know what was that scheme of redemption which the Divine promise told was in store. God forgot it not. He did

not reveal to the patriarchs that He could look with favour on those who sought Him, that He was ever near at hand to hold converse with those who walked uprightly before Him, without giving intimations of the *ground* on which He could thus graciously regard erring man. In every revelation of Himself, He made the material instruments, by which He conveyed His lessons regarding His own attributes and what He required of man, the means of shadowing forth the way in which the world's redemption was to be accomplished.

Such were the principles of the Divine teaching to the early world. But as yet it had only been communicated to a particular family; and men in general were as ignorant as ever how God was to be approached and conciliated, or whether He could be conciliated at all by any except the favoured patriarchs. It was therefore a great step in the process of development, when from the fiery top of Sinai the Majesty of Heaven revealed His attributes and the requisites for obtaining His favour to an entire nation. In the civil and religious polity committed to this people by the Deity Himself, there was a public witness to the world of the character and requirements of God, and, as was shewn by its internal nature, a typical representation of a more expanded religious system which had not yet come to light. In subsequent generations the typical meaning,

and even the moral part of the Jewish covenant, was more and more unfolded, as from time to time inspired men stole the fire of heaven, and exhibited it to the world in the light of prophecy. And when at length, through the dispersion of the chosen nation among the kingdoms of the earth, and the influence of its divine law permeating the philosophy of heathen lands, mankind had so learnt that the long-promised redemption was to be accomplished by a personal Deliverer, as to stand in universal expectation of his coming, the development of revelation had arrived at the stage at which the means of the world's recovery and the full character of God in its aspects towards man, were to be proclaimed—not to an individual, not to a family, not to a nation, but to the entire human race.

At certain crises in this progressive system of revelation God, in order that men might recognize His agency, was pleased to employ miracles in attestation of the doctrines revealed at those particular periods. The first marked crisis at which miracles were necessary was at the exit of Israel from Egypt. Previous to that event, divine lessons had been given to individual patriarchs for their special guidance, not for promulgation in their own time. But when the Law was given to the Jews, the first *public* declaration of divine truth was made; a declaration too, which had an important bearing on the after elucidation

and evidence of Christianity. Here therefore supernatural interference was called for. In following the onward course of revelation, we find periods of miraculous interposition in the times of several of the most distinguished prophets ; till, arriving at the epoch when life and immortality in all their fulness were brought to light by the Gospel, the miraculous power of the Revealer of this life burst forth in all its glory, to witness that Christ was the " Desire of all nations," and that the doctrines of love and mercy which he promulgated were the winding-up lessons in the world's religious training.

We have now to examine, as we proposed in the Introduction, the analogy between these different miracles and the doctrines which they attested ; and we shall endeavour to shew that the miracles performed at each successive stage in the development of revelation, had an ethical meaning exactly coinciding with the doctrines revealed at that particular stage.

CHAPTER II.

The Miracles connected with the Exodus.

IF at any time the world might be said to be “without God,” it was towards the close of Israel’s captivity. It is a sufficient confirmation of the justice of this remark, that the descendants of the family to which alone the truths hitherto revealed were committed*, were nearly as corrupt in religion at this period as their Egyptian oppressors. How sadly must external beholders of our world’s progress,—as we believe the angels to be,—have viewed the spectacle of mankind utterly ignorant of their God, yet sighing after the knowledge of Him and feeling after Him in vain in the grossness of material things. If the exceeding great and bitter cry of a fallen world, uttered in the secret of men’s hearts, were ever audible to the ear of Deity, it must *then* have ascended to Heaven. Nor was God inattentive to that cry. The divine Teacher of mankind was not forgetful of His great work of the world’s education, which in reality was all the while in progress. Not indeed was the full revelation about to be made; but it was the eve of a new and brighter dawn of knowledge than had ever yet broken upon the earth. For the first time in

* See Ezek. xx. 7, 8, and xxiii. 8, 19.

human history God was about to proclaim Himself *publicly*, and to fulfil the promise made to the patriarchs,—to whom alone He had as yet declared Himself,—by choosing their seed as the subjects to whom His proclamation should be made. Degraded and corrupt as was this seed at the period we are speaking of, their very degradation and corruption were important elements in the plan which was being carried out;—the chosen people were thus brought into a condition which made requisite a systematic course of training, before they could be prepared for the new stage of revelation. One part of this course consisted in a series of miraculous interpositions, whose first and apparent end was the conviction of the proud oppressors that it was God who commanded them to let their captives go free, but whose secondary, though perhaps more important purpose, was to instil into the minds of the Israelites the leading doctrines which were shortly afterwards to be embodied in the law of Sinai.

Before entering on a consideration of these miracles, let us call to mind what were the chief features of the revelation then made to Israel.

That a close intercourse with God, a real living relation to Him as a Teacher and a Guide in every act of life, was possible, had been shewn by the experience of the patriarchs. With them a covenant was made, of which this fact constituted the spiritual meaning. Men felt that their

yearnings after communion with a higher intelligence could be satisfied only under a covenant between God and themselves,—only when God had made an overture to them. But to the patriarchs alone had such overtures been made. Who then, among the rest of mankind, could venture to approach the Supreme Being, between whom and the individual stood the feeling of conscious guilt as a barrier which hid Him from view? Were certain favoured persons to be the sole recipients of a boon which the whole world craved? The answer was loudly, though enigmatically published in the thunders of Sinai, when it was declared that what had hitherto been regarded as the privilege of a few holy men,—the near presence of a divine Guide,—should be the privilege of an entire people. “What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them*?” “Wherein shall it be known,” says Moses, “that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us†?” In the *diorama* which the Scriptures exhibit of the gradual unfolding of God’s character, we may conceive the first few scenes to have passed;—the ark, the sole object on a world of waters, and Noah shut into it by the Lord’s own hand,—then Abraham in the plain of Mamre communing with Jehovah, comforted by His assurance, “I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward,”—

* Deut. iv. 7.

† Exod. xxxiii. 16.

Hagar by the fountain of Shur compelled to acknowledge His presence, and to exclaim, "Thou God seest me,"—Jacob, sleeping on his stony pillow in Bethel, enraptured with the vision of heavenly messengers that told him how "God was with him and would keep him in the way that he went,"—these have passed;—a new scene is now moving before us; we see God no longer, as merely the God of Noah, Abraham and Jacob, but in a character more hopeful for the world, as the Deliverer of a whole nation from a bitter servitude, and as a guide not only in a pillar of fire and cloud through the wilderness, but in all the vicissitudes of a national history;—a scene, in which is held forth a type and forecasting of a still further extension of the same blessing, when He shall come as the desire of *all* nations.

But had not other nations, might a heathen say, their guardian divinities, and wherein did the God of Israel differ from them? Therefore was it necessary, at this new unfolding of the Deity, that He should shew Himself as the one Lord of heaven and earth. Hence, to the nation brought out of slavery by God's visible agency, it was declared that their Deliverer was the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, and not a mere *national* deity who was fighting with the gods of Egypt for his own people's freedom. If we had no revelation but that which was vouchsafed to the patriarchal family, Jehovah might have been regarded as

holding a place similar to the Penates of ancient mythology. A law given to an entire people dispelled any such fancy. If again we were told of the mere fact of His covenant with Israel, might we not have assigned Him a place in the world's pantheon beside the Zeus of the Greek, the Jupiter of the Roman, or the Amoun of the Egyptian? But whilst He was pleased in the development of His own scheme to make himself known to a single nation, the revelation He gave them asserted distinctly His world-wide sway, His power over nature and over man, His supremacy as God over all others that pretended to the name of gods. While He spoke to Israel under the endearing title of "the Lord *thy* God," yet could Moses justly say to them, "unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God; there is none else beside Him*." "Know this day and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else†."

We return to the consideration of the miracles wrought at this stage of revelation. Moses and Aaron, as the commissioned agents of Israel's God, came and stood before the tyrant, whose oppressions were made the means of introducing this new promulgation of the truth, and nine times repeated their authoritative demand, "Thus saith the Lord, Let my people go, that they may serve

* Deut. v. 35.

† Deut. iv. 39.

me." On the first refusal, the Nile, the pride of Egypt, that, through which she boasted that her fertility was independent of the clouds, was turned into blood. On the second, the river, with whose waters the Egyptian imagined he drank in immortality, became a source of corruption, and sent forth loathsome multitudes of frogs. Then followed a plague, by which, while it lasted, every act of worship was prevented; the dust of the earth was made to produce lice to infest a nation, whose priests could not approach the altars of their deities if so impure an insect harboured upon them, and, to guard against the slightest risk of contamination, wore only linen garments, and shaved their heads and bodies every third day. Next came swarms of flies at a period of the year when such visitations were but rare, and in spite of the fancied protection of their Beelzebub; then, "a grievous murrain" upon their cattle, the cattle, the very staple of their sacred forms, the gross representations under which they veiled their divinities. Then their own vile* superstition was made a weapon against them; the ashes which they were wont to imagine, when taken from altars where human victims had bled, and scattered over the face of the land, diffused health and prosperity, became, when sprinkled by Jehovah's messenger, a source of loathsome dis-

* See these points enlarged upon in Bryant's *Plagues of Egypt*.

ease, attacking even the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses. But now the heavens enter into the contest ; and in a land where the scarcity of rain was proverbial, at the stretching forth of Moses's rod, hail and rain, mingled with fire, came down with destructive fury. What this plague left of the herb of the field, locusts, covering the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened, devoured ; and then, as if at one mighty stroke to mock their religious system in that quarter in which was centred the unity of the whole*, the *Sun* was made to withdraw its light from their land, and leave them in the midst of "a darkness which might be felt." Still Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let the people go. Therefore came there the last of this awful series, and compelled him to yield ;—in the dead of the night there was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt,—“for there was not a house where there was not one dead.”

In all these miraculous visitations, what else do we see but the putting forth of an Omnipotence, under whose hand are all the departments of nature,—to which all the sacred things that

* Although the god Sun or Phré occupied only the third rank among the Egyptian deities, it is mixed up in a remarkable manner with all the other divinities ; his name is annexed to those of all the superior deities, and those which are inferior to him derive their descent from him. See *Antiquities of Egypt*, chap. vi. pp. 126, 127.

men, after their own vain imaginations, have set up and exalted to the rank of divinities, are but instruments,—instruments often even of destruction to their worshippers? What else beside this could they have appeared to an Israelite? Accustomed as he must have been in his captivity to regard Egypt as under the sway of its own peculiar deities, just as his ancestors had been under the guardianship of Jehovah, he must have received with awe and wonder the new and crushing proof now given of the universal supremacy of his fathers' God. He saw the deified Nile impotent to resist the power which putrefied its waters, for the very purpose of humbling its worshippers. He saw the Sun, the heavens, the animal world, all the powers of nature in short on which the Egyptian looked with reverence, suddenly becoming ministers of Jehovah's will, deserting, as it were, the service of the imaginary divinities to whom they were falsely regarded as subservient, just at the moment when their supposed lords were challenged by the God of Israel; and in the last fearful plague he saw life and death,—(and what more was requisite to demonstrate Omnipotence?)—to be entirely at His bidding.

But the fact thus communicated to the Jew was, as we have already seen, no mere isolated lesson. The Lord of the universe thus exhibited His majesty as *Israel's Deliverer*. The favoured nation had to be prepared for the precious gift of

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a covenant by which a channel of communication would be open between God and them; they needed to be shewn practically *how* such communication was possible. In parental tenderness and condescension was this new lesson taught to these wayward children. In the day that the houses of the Egyptians were full of swarms of flies, He severed the land of Goshen, where his people dwelt, that no swarms of flies should be there (Exod. viii. 22). When the hand of the Lord was upon the cattle of Egypt so that they died, of the cattle of the children of Israel there died not one (ix. 6). When "the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast, and every herb of the field;—only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail" (ix. 25, 26). When "there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days, then all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (x. 22, 23). Then came a mighty proof of divine favour to the chosen people,—when the Red Sea was severed, and a pathway cut through its waters for their final escape from Pharaoh. "With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea." A pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, directed them in all their wanderings;—beautiful image of the doctrine, which God was gradually unfolding

to the world, that He can be man's ever-present guide. In the wilderness they were fed with manna from heaven, and their thirst was assuaged by water miraculously drawn from the rock. The wounds inflicted by the serpents, which their sin had brought upon them, were healed by no human art; but by a means of God's own appointment, the elevation of a brazen serpent,—a type this, of a great event yet in the womb of time, which was the *ground* of all these mercies to man. Arrived at the borders of the promised land, still Omnipotence aided them. Jordan was no barrier to their entrance; fenced cities could not prevent their possession of it. The walls of Jericho fell down by no mighty engines of war, but at the trumpets' blast, sounded by the ministers of peace; and lastly, the Sun and Moon were called to join in the Lord's battle for His people, and to bear their testimony that the God of nature was in the midst of those whom He had chosen to be in covenant with Himself.

Here then a pledge was given, that one day a ladder would be set up connecting earth with heaven, by which prayers should ascend, and blessings descend, between God and the whole human race. If there was in the manner of giving this pledge a character of severity, let it be remembered that the divine *justice* had first to be appreciated and feared, before the sinner could feel his need of a redemption. "By the law is the know-

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ledge of sin," and the knowledge also of God's hatred of sin. In it "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." For the full development of God's plans were miracles of pure mercy reserved, when man, humbled and convicted, was to be offered a free acceptance to favour. To us Christians the offer has been made; to us the pledge has been redeemed. We can now, in every circumstance of life, look up to heaven, and feel we have there a Father;—and not only so; for we may wander over the face of the earth, and of *every* place we can say, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

CHAPTER III.

The Miracles of Elijah and of Daniel.

“**W**HAT is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou visitest him?” He trembles and obeys when he hears God’s voice speaking to him in the irresistible language of miracle ; but let that voice be heard no more ; his heart, ever prone to err, finds out many inventions. A law put forth amid all the terrors of God’s visible majesty, within a few days so lost its power, that those who had received it with fear and reverence, were indulging in licentious revelry before an image of gold. Shall we wonder then if, after the lapse of nearly six centuries, sacred history gives us, in the state of the Israelitish people, a picture of deep-rooted perversion from the faith which was originally delivered to their fathers ! When, moreover, we look into the circumstances which had occurred in their history, and call to mind the peculiar position both of Israel and Judah, as under a partial and typical revelation, we shall find other reasons for not regarding as strange the kind of corruption which tainted religion in the time of Elijah. God had revealed himself only through material forms ; his presence was indicated by the visible Schekinah between the cherubim ; and in every approach

which was made to Him, the Ephod, the Urim and Thummim, or some outward symbol, had to be employed. Whatever warnings the law had put forth against making representations of the Deity, the purely spiritual character of God, and of the worship which He requires, was clearly not the great point which it directly inculcated, or which lay on the surface of its teaching. Amid all the materialism of their religious system, it is not surprising, therefore, that the chosen people should be prone to attach to their God an idea borrowed for some visible object. In their open perversions of His law, they scrupled not to bow down before idols of their own workmanship; and, at other times, there were invariably indications of a misapprehension of God's spiritual character. When the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel were separated, Jeroboam took advantage of this general feeling to ensure the stability of his own throne. The substitution of the calves of Dan and Bethel, for the Schekinah at Jerusalem, was a measure which the people seem easily to have concurred in, although a glaring violation of the law. Each successor to the crown of Israel continued the sin of Jeroboam, till Ahab introduced a system, which from the frequency with which both sections of the Hebrew nation took it up both before and after this occasion, and the universality and zeal with which it was now embraced, appears to have held a middle place be-

tween the pure worship of the law, and the direct rejection of it implied in undisguised idolatry. Many who would scruple to regard the image of a brute as the God who brought their nation out of Egypt, might have conceived that they were following out the spirit of the Mosaic system, when, removed as they were by outward circumstances from the token of Jehovah's presence at Jerusalem, they took some one of the more majestic forms of nature as the symbol of His Being*. The worship of Baal or the Sun† afforded the means of carrying out this idea. To an Israelite, who could see little but materialism even in the perfect law of Sinai, and whose mind had been recently corrupted by the coarser kind of worship set up by Jeroboam, the visible source of life and heat would seem any thing but a low emblem of the Deity. This, I say, would be his first feeling; but when once indulged, it would, as it has ever been found to do, accede to all the gross accom-

* That the worship of Baal and other imaginary deities was, among the Jews, combined with the ordinances of the Mosaic law, appears at once from such passages as Jer. vii. 9, 10, and Ezek. xxiii. 39.

† Without entering at length into the arguments which support the identity of Baal with the Sun, I will only refer to 2 Kings xxi. 3, and xxiii. 5, in proof that at least the two idolatries were *connected* with one another. That the Jews later on were certainly guilty of sun-worship, we learn from Ezek. viii. 16.

paniments which seem to have attended the Baal-worship of Ahab's reign.

But though the spirituality of the divine character was not distinctly evolved from the Mosaic law, yet was it a truth which the world needed to know ere it could appreciate the mysteries which the Gospel was to disclose; and in the deep-laid schemes of God's providence, the corruptions which His people had based on the materialism of his own law, were turned into an occasion of still further unfolding His character. There appears on the stage a mysterious messenger. His first proclamation announces, without explanation or reason, a national calamity: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew or rain these years, but according to my word." He disappears from the scene; and Israel, left to their distress, cry out to their *material* God for rain. But the glare of the unclouded Sun tells them that *it* is not "the Lord God of Israel" who restrains from them the rain and dew. And now Elijah appears again, and, in a voice of command, bids the king summon the priests of Baal. He meets them on the heights of Carmel, and challenges them in the name of Jehovah to call forth the power of their God. "Let Baal from yon flaming orb send down and kindle your sacrifice; and I will call upon the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God."

Then he appeals to the deluded people, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." If yonder Sun is Lord of Creation, then cast away the worship of Jehovah; but if Jehovah is God, then dishonour Him not by linking His spiritual essence with the material form of one of His own creatures. Such was the question at issue. It was triumphantly decided for Jehovah, when in vain from morning till noon, and then from noon till the offering of the evening sacrifice, the cry from four hundred and fifty mouths was continued, "Oh Baal, hear us!"—the sounds died away among the echoes of the mountains; and while their God calmly performed His daily circuit of the heavens, there was no voice, nor any that answered. But Elijah came near and said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel." Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice; and Jehovah was proved to be the invisible Lord of the highest forms of nature, which therefore might not be taken as personating His majesty;—a truth, which was presently shewn to the prophet alone in that magnificent scene on Mount Horeb, when, "behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, but *the Lord was not in the wind*; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but

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the Lord was not in the fire ; and after the fire, a still small voice."

Before concluding this chapter, we must briefly allude to the last remarkable period of the Jewish dispensation, when miracles were publicly performed in support of revelation. Three hundred years had passed away since Elijah's time ; Israel had long ceased to be a nation ; and Judah was now undergoing the consequence of her sins in a foreign captivity. But was religion altogether dead, and revelation stopped in its progress, because the temple was laid low, and the outward testimonies to the law of Sinai concealed from view ? Far from it. Even this very desolation of the outer depositories of religion was one of the onward steps of Divine wisdom. Ere six centuries would have elapsed, a kingdom was to be set up which should never be destroyed, which should rule over all the kingdoms of the earth,—even the spiritual kingdom of the God of heaven. All nations were interested in its establishment ; but one only had as yet been acquainted with the character of its founder, or with the charter of his government. It now pleased the Almighty to teach the heathen monarch of the mightiest existing kingdom, truths which had hitherto been locked up in the keeping of the now captive nation ;—to send down a few drops of the shower which was ere long to refresh the world. Here too the lesson was taught by miracles. The forgot-

ten dream narrated and interpreted by Daniel,—the three faithful servants of God passing uninjured through the burning fiery furnace,—the voice that fell from heaven, “The kingdom is departed from thee,”—himself driven from among men, and made to eat grass as oxen,—all these compelled Nebuchadnezzar to “bless the Most High, and to praise and honour Him that liveth for ever,” and to confess “that His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation;—that all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and that He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” We cannot doubt that the miracles wrought in the times of Nebuchadnezzar’s successors, Belshazzar and Darius, had the same general end, namely, to give an earnest of the future removal of all barriers which shut out the human race from the knowledge of their God. The hand that came forth and wrote upon the wall, proclaimed to the thousand nobles of Babylon, that He whose sacred vessels they had been polluting was Lord of heaven—the God in whose hand is the breath of man, and whose are all his ways. The miraculous deliverance of Daniel from the lions’ den, brought the same truth before the monarch of Persia; and led him to make the de-

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cree, "That in every dominion of his kingdom men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end."

CHAPTER IV.

The Christian Miracles.

WE are wont to look with peculiar pity on one afflicted with blindness, to whom

“Returns not

Day, or the sweet approach of eve or morn;”

but such an one has a moral counterpart,—one for whom our far deeper compassion may well be aroused,—in the man by whom, through the blinding influences of infidelity, the dealings of God with the world are unobserved,—those dealings which are so well typified by the continually expanding dawn. Had he the undimmed eye of faith, (and might we not add, of reason?) which the simple believer in Revelation possesses, he would have seen in the dispensations previous to Christianity, that gradually increasing ruddiness of the spiritual horizon which told of the approach of day; and when the Sun of Righteousness rose upon the Earth, he would welcome His morning beams, and rejoice to see them communicating to awakened mankind just such life and energy as our Sun does to nature, when it opens the flowers and exhibits all the varieties of colour and all the fair proportions observable in the face of creation.

Are we not justified in thus describing the

rise of Christianity, and in lamenting the blindness of one who conceives the same dark night to hide the face of God as hid Him from the heathen world of old, when we consider the magnitude of the step which Revelation then made in advance? He who hitherto had only spoken to men by prophets, or else in the midst of terrors and darkness, now came and spoke to them *Himself*, and that, in the form of the meekest and the gentlest of their own race. He who had declared Himself as the holy avenging Deity, who could not look upon iniquity, now proclaimed Himself a compassionate Saviour, whose arms were open to receive the penitent. He who at first was the God only of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who subsequently so far extended His favour as to take a whole nation into covenant with Himself, now appeared as the covenant God and Father of all. As yet those few holy men and that favoured people had been His only children; but now, He adopted into His family all the families of earth; He unbosomed His parental love to men simply as men, giving them His Son to be the necessary atonement for their sin, and His Spirit to be a channel of communication between Himself and them, as an earnest of His continual presence with them as their invisible Guide and Teacher.

It will not be difficult to find traces of the features which thus mark the full development of

revelation in its accompanying signs, as we have done in considering its earlier stages. Those signs were like the light summer-clouds which surround the rising Sun, proclaiming in their fiery colours the presence of the king of day, and thus enhancing his glory by the light which they borrow from him. There ought therefore to be discernible in them the same tints, so to speak, as are seen in the doctrines to which they are supplementary. That this is the case a brief survey of the miracles wrought by our Lord when on earth will be sufficient to shew.

I. They were essentially works of mercy. A power over the bodies of men, over life, over death, over all the elements of nature, exerted solely in healing diseases, in opening the eyes of the blind, in restoring the son to the widowed mother, or the brother to the sorrowing sisters, in bidding the tempest "Peace, be still," in order to save the Galilæan seamen from a watery grave, in turning water into wine in order to bless the marriage-feast of humble life,—a power thus exerted was well adapted to be the outward witness of His benevolent mission; who came to reveal God as the *Father* of all mankind, and to bring out, in a way hitherto unknown, the divine attribute of mercy, by concentrating in Himself the debts due to divine justice, thus leaving the gentler attribute for man. The works of Christ have this character of benevolence without a single

exception; for the only miracle which has at all been supposed to contradict the generality of this assertion,—the withering of the barren fig-tree,—in reality partook peculiarly of this nature. Christ wished to give a solemn warning and prophetic intimation of what must come upon a nation to whom the kingdom of God had been given and who had not brought forth the fruits thereof. To convey this lesson he chose as the instrument of his symbolic teaching, not man, not a sensitive creature, not even a part of inanimate nature which might be useful to man, but a *fruitless* tree. In this respect the miracles of the Gospel are strikingly distinguished from those of foregoing dispensations. Not that under them there were no works of mercy wrought, no diseases cured, none raised from the dead; but while beneficence was the one ruling principle of the Christian wonders, those which had preceded were cast in a much sterner mould. There, God was declared the protector of His favoured people by acts of terror and destructiveness, directed, at one time against Egypt, at another against the inhabitants of Canaan,—now by the infliction of blindness on the Syrian army, now by the mission of an angel to destroy the hosts of Sennacherib; here, He was proved the Father of the human race by the visible outgoings of parental love towards all. There, His spiritual character was vindicated, and man was admonished to beware how he wor-

shipped a material representation of His essence, by the descent of fire on mount Carmel; here, the same spiritual character of Deity was inculcated in the persuasive teaching of the discourses which so frequently accompanied Christ's miracles of mercy, while the only material form in which God could be manifested was shewn to be the human body of Him, who was declared to be the Son of God by that greatest miracle of mercy,—the Resurrection from the dead*.

II. But beside exhibiting the benevolent character of the new revelation, Christ's miracles brought out into bold relief another most important feature which characterized it as the development of preceding dispensations. *They* had told of the possibility of close intercourse of man with God; they had afforded instances of it in Enoch who "walked with God," and in Abraham who was "His Friend;" and in the history of Israel, they had given a typical intimation of the extension of this privilege to the world at large. But in Christianity the blessing in all its richness was bestowed on man. It told him that God was ever near at hand; that He has not to be felt after, as in the times of former ignorance, but that He may be met with in the inner chambers of the heart, now made capable of becoming the residence of His Spirit, in every action of life, and

* Rom. i. 4.

at every spot on the surface of creation. Religion has thus been made a thing of every-day life, affording guidance and help to *all*, suited to every difficulty, every human feeling, every desire ;—a book,

“ Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef* ”.

And how beautifully is this doctrine exhibited in the beneficent works of our Lord ! We find him, at the very commencement of his miracles mixing in the rejoicings of a marriage-feast, drawing from the stores of his divine power for the supply of means wherewith to celebrate the festive occasion. We have no need to seek out deep mystical lessons which are supposed to be conveyed in this miracle ; if it has any ethical meaning, that meaning surely lies on the surface†, shewing us that marriage, social intercourse, and the various occupations of daily life, are capable of being sanctified by Christ's presence and blessing ;—teaching us “ to look upon the every-day order of existence as a divine order,” and upon God as connected “ not with exceptional acts, but with the

* Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

† As an illustration of the length to which some have gone in seeking a mystical meaning in Christ's miracles, see Cyril's extravagant spiritualization of this miracle.

habitual course and current of existence*.” The same lesson may be discerned in the circumstances under which the miraculous draught of fishes was brought to the disciples’ net†. Our Lord meets his Apostles in their daily avocations as fishermen, and conveys to them an intimation of their future ministerial work of “catching men” by a supernatural blessing on the means of their livelihood. In the same manner, in the raising of the widow’s son at Nain, and of Lazarus, may we not discover something more than a character of general benevolence, or an exhibition of dazzling power? In the former act was shewn a deep compassion for the lonely widowhood and bereaved helplessness of her whose only son was carried out for burial; and the latter was clearly dictated by the interest and affection with which the Saviour regarded the domestic circumstances of the simple family of Bethany. Here then we learn that His religion recognizes and soothes every human sorrow, and can find a place by every family hearth. It shuts not its eyes even upon the artificial duties of men,—so closely does it connect itself with daily existence. Christ wrought one of His miracles,—He caused a fish to bring him the tribute-money,—specially to teach us that our relations to human institutions

* Maurice *on the Old Testament*, Sermon V. p. 83.

† Luke v. 4.

were not beneath his notice nor beyond the application of his precepts.

III. But further, Christianity was pre-eminently the setting-forth of that redemption from the effects of Adam's transgression, for which through long ages his descendants had been yearning. Christ's miracles were the tokens of His power to satisfy this one great need of the world;—they proved Him to be its Redeemer. Men had received sufficiently plain notices that the Person they looked for was to come in the character of a Deliverer from sin; and although prophecy had been so far misinterpreted by carnal pride, that a temporal King and Victor was expected, we cannot conceive a pious Jew misunderstanding such direct intimations of the true nature of the Messiah's office as were given by the prophets: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." To satisfy the hopes thus awakened, to declare himself the actual Messiah of prophecy, in the grand feature of his foretold character as *Redeemer*, was the all-important end of Christ's ministry on

earth. Thus we see how essential it was that His miracles, as the public witnesses to the nature of His mission, should have the character of *redemptive acts*. How literally they fulfilled this character is thus beautifully shewn by Professor Trench: "The evils what are they, which hinder man from reaching the true end and aim of his creation, and from which he needs a redemption? It may briefly be answered, that they are sin in its moral and in its physical manifestations. If we regard its moral manifestations, the darkness of the understanding, the wild discords of the spiritual life, none were such fearful examples of its tyranny as the demoniacs; they were special objects, therefore, of the miraculous power of the Lord. Then if we ask ourselves what are the physical manifestations of sin; they are sicknesses of all kinds—fevers, palsies, leprosies, blindness, each of these death beginning, a partial death—and, finally, the death absolute of the body. This region is therefore fitly another, as it is the widest region, of his redemptive grace. In the conquering and removing these evils, he eminently bodied forth the idea of himself as the Redeemer of man. But besides these, sin has its manifestations more purely physical; it reveals itself and its consequences in the tumults and strifes of the elements among themselves, as in the rebellion of nature against man; for the destinies of the

natural world were linked to the destinies of man : and when he fell he drew after him his whole inheritance, which became subject to the same vanity as himself. Therefore do we behold the Lord, him in whom the lost was recovered, walking on the stormy waves, or quelling the menace of the sea with his word ; incorporating in these acts the deliverance of man from the rebel-powers of nature, which had risen up against him, and, instead of being his willing servants, were oftentimes now his tyrants and his destroyers. These also were redemptive acts. Even the two or three of his works which seem not to range themselves so readily under any of these heads, yet are not indeed exceptions. For instance, the multiplying of the bread easily shews itself as such. The original curse of sin was the curse of barrenness,—the earth yielding hard-won and scanty returns to the sweat and labour of man ; but here this curse is removed, and in its stead the primæval abundance for a moment reappears. All scantiness and scarceness, such as this lack of bread in the wilderness, such as that failing of the wine at the marriage-feast, belonged not to man as his portion at the first ; for all the earth was appointed to serve him, and to pour the fullness of its treasure into his lap. That he ever should hunger and thirst, that he should have need of anything, was a consequence of Adam's

sin,—fitly, therefore, removed by him, the Second Adam, who came to give back all which had been forfeited by the first*.”

IV. But this Redeemer was to be divine. It cost more than any created being could give to redeem men's souls; therefore except *God* paid the price, their deliverance must be let alone for ever. Here again is a doctrine of vital importance in the new revelation, which Christ's miracles, we shall find, do not fail to illustrate.

When he stilled the storm, it was by no deputed power;—upon his own authority alone “he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still;” so much so that the beholders wondered, saying, “What manner of man is this; for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.” When his healing mercy was craved by the sick or possessed, he gave the boon under conditions which he imposed of his own will. When he was addressed by the suppliant leper, “Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean,” the answer was, “*I will*, be thou clean;” which authoritative assertion of inherent power was confirmed by the miraculous result,—“immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” The healing of the paralytic was in direct attestation of His divinity. Saith Christ to the sick man, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” “Who,” exclaim the scribes, “can forgive sins but God

* Trench on the *Miracles*, chap. iii. p. 30.

only?" That they might know that he had power to forgive sins, and might thence draw the inference which their own assertion made inevitable, "He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house." Or if we look at that most stupendous miracle of all, the raising of Lazarus, we seem to see in it at once a crowning proof of divine might. So indeed we may; yet not so much from the mere fact of life being restored,—for men had before raised the dead,—as from the circumstances under which the act was wrought. The Saviour, when he knew that his friend Lazarus was dead, came from Bethabara to Bethany to comfort the bereaved family in the circle of which he had so often found refreshment for his human weariness. Martha meets him ere he arrives; and in the earnestness of her grief, "Lord," she exclaims, "if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!" Christ thereupon takes opportunity,—drawing from no ordinary fountain of consolation,—to point to a principle of Life in himself, which he was able to communicate even to her dead brother. "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." No stronger declaration can be conceived than Christ here makes of his own divinity. And when he told her, "Thy brother shall rise again," he pledged himself to prove that he was the Source

of this life by the resurrection of Lazarus, as he afterwards explained, when he reminded her, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" When therefore he stood by the grave surrounded by the sisters and their fellow-mourners, then, if ever, his pretensions to a divine character were brought to the trial. The sequel to that loud cry, "Lazarus, come forth!"—the appearance of the dead breaking out from the sepulchre,—was the conclusive proof that *His* was the voice of the Son of God, which when those that are in the graves hear, they must come forth.

V. Once more, several of the miracles of Christ set him forth in the character of a law-giver having authority over the old law, and as a Priest of an order superior to that of the Levitical priests,—characteristics at once indicative of the Framer of the new and better Covenant, and which form the entire subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is strikingly brought out in the cleansing of the leper narrated by St Matthew (viii. 2—4). Under the Mosaic system, to touch a leper rendered a man ceremonially unclean; to the priest alone belonged the power of examining and touching a leper without incurring defilement*. Christ, though no priest by the institutions of the Law, touched the leprous man, and in that touch, so far from acquiring to himself contami-

* Levit. xiv.

nation, took away the leprosy. "Tetigit leprosum," says Tertullian*, "a quo etsi homo inquinari potuisset, Deus utique non inquinaretur;" and again, in allusion to the analogous cleansing of the ten lepers, "Quoniam ipse erat authenticus Pontifex Dei Patris, inspexit illos secundum legis arcanum, significantis Christum esse verum disceptatorem et elimatorem humanarum macularum†." At the same time that, by means which seemed to set at nought the Law, he healed the leprosy, he directed the leper to fulfil the requirements of that Law, shewing that he came not to destroy, but to fulfil; and thus declaring, in the most direct manner possible, that he stood above it, being, in fact, its Author. The same teaching is conveyed by those miracles which Christ performed on the Sabbath-day. One of them†, the restoration of the withered hand, was wrought specially to prove that "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day." In the discourse which preceded it Christ had argued against the strictness of the Pharisaic observance of the Sabbath;—illustrating his point by the example of David, and of the priests, who in the temple profaned the Sabbath; but resting his highest argument on the fact, that "in that place was one greater than the temple," one greater than David and the Levitical priests, "qui verus Rex et verus Sacerdos est, et ideo

* Adv. Marcion. Lib. iv. cap. 9.

† Ibid. cap. 35.

‡ Matt. xii. 9.

Dominus Sabbati*." The miraculous act that followed made good the pretensions thus set up, and proved that the ordinances of the law must bow before Him who was come as the lawgiver of a new and better dispensation.

VI. Again, the gospel miracles were in many cases actual symbolical channels of Christian doctrine. I am aware, that in speaking of the typical meaning of that which Scripture narrates as historic fact, I am treading on dangerous ground, and that this idea may be, and has been, exaggerated to an extent full of peril, even to Christianity itself. The name of Woolston, and the vagaries of the German mythical interpreters of modern days, may well serve as beacons to warn us against too extensive spiritualization of the simple facts of Christ's life. Our safety lies in giving a symbolical meaning to any act of our Lord only in those cases where either he himself, or the language of Scripture, gives us the warrant for doing so. Thus, when we read of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand by the lake of Tiberias†, we might naturally regard it as a significant emblem of those spiritual blessings of which Christ is the Author,—the means of Eternal Salvation, and the Gospel preached to the poor. But we should not have been justified in supposing any such typical meaning *designedly* latent in the miracle, had not Christ himself applied it to the

* St Augustine.

† John vi.

spiritual teaching of those that witnessed it. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. I am the bread of life; whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." In like manner, we find, on the same authority, an analogy between the miraculous draught of fishes and the Divine appointment of the ministry. It would appear, from the circumstances under which this miracle was wrought, that the very object of it was to arouse the faith of Peter and the sons of Zebedee in Christ's power, to aid them in the arduous work to which He had called them. It was as if he had said to them: "Fear not when I call you from your fishing boats to persuade men that I am the Christ. Hard and hopeless though the task may appear, yet hereby you have a pledge that I will be with you, and will bring many to your net. From henceforth ye shall catch men."

There is a clear analogy,—one, moreover, which is recognized in Scripture,—between the works of healing which our Lord performed and His removal of the spiritual diseases of the soul. We have already seen that they were redemptive acts, and so were fit indications of the nature of the Saviour's work. Or, to come more closely to the point, we may even say they were *designed* to represent the office of Him who cleanses us from all unrighteousness. St Matthew appears to intimate as much,

when he connects the prophecies of Isaiah in the fifty-third chapter, relating to the Messiah, which have so clear a reference to His work as a Spiritual Deliverer, with the cures wrought by Christ. "He cast out the Spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*." And we are not without Christ's own authority for the idea. In several instances He pointed out, in the most marked manner, this spiritual import of His works. When He said to the sick of the palsy, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house:" He did so, that the beholders might know that the Son of Man had power on earth *to forgive sins*. On another occasion†, when about to open the eyes of a blind man, He pre-faced the cure by declaring Himself "the Light of the World;" and after the miracle, He applies it to the elucidation of the object of His mission in the following terms: "For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." So again, we are justified in attaching a mystical import to the recovery of demoniacs. For it can scarcely be doubted that when Christ exclaimed, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," he referred to the discomfiture of the evil one by His own work of

* Matt. viii. 16, 17.

† John ix.

redemption ;—and yet this remark was elicited by the rejoicings of the disciples, “ Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name.” Still more clearly did our Saviour intimate the connexion between the cure of those possessed and the spiritual overthrow of the kingdom of darkness, when, in combating the cavil of the Jews, “ He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils,” he argued, “ If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself ; how shall then his kingdom stand ? If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you*.”

What has here been said of Christ’s works of healing, may be said with equal truth of his miracles of raising the dead. It would be impossible to conceive that they were not actual pledges of the final resurrection of man to an eternal life, which through Christ had been brought to light, even had we not the express sanction of Holy Writ for so representing them. We have seen that the raising of Lazarus certainly had this character, that it directly attested Christ to be the *Resurrection* and the *Life* ; and in the discourse of our Lord given in the fifth chapter of St John’s Gospel, the temporary rescue of the bodies of a few men from the jaws of death is distinctly shewn by Him to be an earnest of a general resurrection of the human race. Alluding to His

* Matt. xii. 26—28.

miracles He says : " The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth ; and He will shew Him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, *and now is*, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live. Marvel not at this ; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth."

Of the miracles wrought by the Apostles little need be said. They partook of the same character as Christ's acts of wonder,—differing only so far as the works of the Divine Founder of a religion and those of his human deputies must differ. Whatever power was exhibited in their performance was derived from him,—whatever doctrines they illustrated, were those which *He* came to institute, and His miracles had illustrated before. They were necessary only as attestations to the truth of the Apostles' preaching till the world should be leavened by the doctrines of the Gospel ; and when the necessity had ceased, the miraculous power which had been given to the Church to enable her to prove her connexion with her divine Head was withdrawn.

Thus then God has been teaching the world, from the moment that it began to require teaching, by regular gradations of instruction; and where He saw it to be necessary He has enforced His lessons by interpositions of His own Omnipotence. And how striking is the *unity* which has pervaded all these His dealings! Miracles exhibited at any one stage of the educational process correspond with the doctrines taught at that stage; while the doctrines, like a widening river, expand more and more, ever tending to become merged in that ocean of boundless truth which man can only contemplate when he stands on the shores of eternity. With this view of revelation, of the harmonious progression of its miracles and doctrines, we shall be able to reconcile truths which, enunciated in different parts of Scripture, apparently contradict one another, and to unite different features in the divine character which seem to be in opposition. We shall understand how the stern commands and miracles of the law came from the same Lawgiver as the gentle precepts and works of the Gospel,—how the God of justice who thundered from Sinai was the same as the God of mercy who revealed Himself on Calvary. And above all, we shall see how unmistakeable is the origin of the system on which all our faith and all our hopes are centred. We shall be as fully convinced of the agency of Divinity in all the steps of its development, from the

plagues of Egypt to the gracious works of Christ, as was Elijah, when he beheld in Horeb the successive signs of God's approach, the whirlwind, the earthquake, the fire, and then—the still small voice. Let us, like the prophet, wrap our face in our mantle, and listen to His commands.

Here we stop our rambles, pleasant though they be, in the fields of revealed truth. If from them has accrued to the writer or the reader any fresh confirmation of their faith, any new reverence and love towards the God whose ways of grace and wonder in dealing with sinful man, they have thus been led to contemplate together, it will not be in vain that they have surveyed a subject which brings to view one of the many beautiful harmonies of our religion. The perfect blending of its words and works is a feature of revelation calculated, not only to silence the sceptical objector, but also to afford new stability to the firmest believer. *He*,—however some, in marshalling the evidences of Christianity, may have magnified the miracles at the expense of the doctrines, or the doctrines at the expense of the miracles,—will feel that in the combination of the two as consonant parts of a whole, his own foot finds the most sure standing-place; and that the outward harmonies of the truth, when they have

counterparts in the *inner* harmonies to which the influence of religion on the heart gives rise, are “ shadows and reflections of the Rock of Ages*,” which teach him to rest his faith on that immutable foundation.

* Coleridge.

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